

Origin of the Taiwan Mission Foundation(TMf)

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2-17-2008 translated by Sandi Liu

The world-famous novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, describes the female protagonist's love as the "golden thread" that held her family and the individuals around her together. In the same way, I have felt that the Taiwan Mission Foundation is much like the "golden thread" that has pervaded my life, culminating in its founding in 2007.

With regards to Taiwan, my maternal grandfather was the country's second lawyer, and the leader of the Cheng Family. He often brought me and my two brothers along on his travels throughout Taiwan, and he introduced us to the "Wang-Tian" (meaning King's Lands) farmed by Koxinga's (Cheng Cheng-Gong's) army. These trips caused our young and impressionable hearts to fall deeply in love with the beautiful island. Unfortunately, I recently read that in 1661, upon Koxinga's (Cheng Cheng-Gong's) arrival on the island, he deported all the existing Dutch armies and missionaries, banned Christianity, and killed five thousand aboriginal Pai-Wan tribe members of the Christian faith (recorded in daily devotion of Crossroads Publications 1-10-2008 in Chinese, translated from Global Prayer Digest). This shocked and saddened me greatly.

As for missionary work, Rev. James Hudson Taylor, III, great-grandson of English missionary James Hudson Taylor, was the Kaoshiung Holy Light Bible College President in the 1960s, where he was receiving lessons in conversational Taiwanese from Kaohsiung Yan-Chern Presbyterian Church elder and good friend Dr. Yang Tien-Ho, my father. Before my arrival in the United States in 1970, I also learned English conversation from President Taylor's family at his home. While doing a foreign language degree at National Taiwan University, I was given the English name "Eileen" by the American missionary at Friendship Corner, Miss Margaret Sells, and I have continued to use the name to-date.

After moving to the United States, my husband and I started the first global Taiwanese Christian monthly chronicle, *Overseas Taiwanese Christians United Press*, which we published from 1973-76. Later, we stepped out of the confines of the church, and in true 'Word was made flesh' spirit, we founded and operated the *Voice of Taiwan* from 1977-82, to serve the global Taiwanese community through telephone news broadcasts and provide nourishment for their spirit and soul.

1998 was a turning point in my life. A spring trip to Israel awoke me from my innocence and urged me to solemnly reflect on my faith and the true meaning of being God's chosen people. When I realized that God elected the "New Chosen People" – Christians – to replace the Israelites due to the Israelites' failure for two thousand years to bring God's blessings to all the nations on earth, I began urging fellow Christians to pick up the pace on spreading the Gospel, or we might end up like the Israelites at the turn of the second two thousand years. That same fall, upon God's calling, and upon the suggestion of Pastor Wilfred Su, who was previously my Kaohsiung Yan-Chern Presbyterian Church Sunday school teacher and former vice president of the Logos Evangelical Seminary, I decided to do graduate studies in theology. In the middle of my studies, Taiwan suffered the massive 921 earthquake, and the following spring, I started out on my first missionary steps and headed towards the heavily affected area of Puli with a New York group for a short-term missions project. At the end of 1998, I was once again moved after attending the Chinese Mission Conference, which is held once every three years. The seed and passion of missions work blossomed inside me and moved me to promote mission by giving testimonies of other churches to Taiwanese churches in the greater New York area.

With the rapid development of "China Mission" in the last ten years, I have sometimes asked myself where is the development of "Taiwan Mission?" I placed my thoughts about missionary work on hold until after 2005, when I wrapped up the theological education ministry that had occupied me since graduation. At the end of that same year, I entered a Doctor of Ministry program at the Bethel Seminary of the East. On May 1 of the following year (2006), I suddenly received a telephone call from Joseph Chang, senior pastor of Evangelical Formosan Church of Irvine in California, who is also my former seminary professor. He told me that his church had a 75% success rate of bringing Taiwanese children to Christ as part of their missions program, which engages second generation youth from the United States in teaching English to elementary and middle school students in Taiwan for a week. Pastor Chang very much looked forward to having me jump start this program on the east coast. I was, on the one hand, surprised to hear about the idea of a "Taiwan Mission," and, on the other hand, shocked at the 75% success rate in Taiwan, which is known for its difficulty with missionaries. However, upon hearing this news, I felt God was opening the great door to Taiwan missions in general. Without hesitation I said, "I will go." I wanted to see it myself first-hand. I ended up participating in three consecutive short-term missions trips: summer and winter of 2006, and summer of 2007. I saw much of Taiwan's coast, plus mountainous inland aboriginal and industrial areas, and the emotions they stirred up stayed with me for a very long time. It particularly saddens and fills me with guilt to see the number of Christians in Taiwan never surpassing 3% and even continuing to decline, while neighboring countries have been experiencing rapid growth in their numbers: Korea 35%, China 10%, even in the Muslim countries of Indonesia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, 4%.

In September 2006, I shared for the first time my thoughts on "Taiwan missions" via a sermon entitled "The Mission of An Isolated Beautiful Island." I also gave a copy of the sermon to Dr. Howshan Lin in California and Pastor Henry Kwan of the New York First Baptist Church of Flushing (also professor of Missions at the Bethel Seminary of the East and my mentor). When Pastor Kwan saw me on January 24, 2007, he said, "Why don't you start an organization to promote 'Taiwan mission'? Your lawyer daughter can help you incorporate it! And I can be your advisor." This was the moment that God opened the road ahead of me. And open it wide He did. From then on, many Taiwanese churches and fellowships began extending invitations to me to share about "Taiwan mission" with them. Many pastors asked, "Why are you so passionate and which organization do you represent?" At the end of January, the conclusion from a discussion amongst Pastor Joseph Chang, Pastor Tse Feng Chuang, and Dr. Howshan Lin of the California EFC Irvine Church was: "You should set up your own organization on the east coast, because we are only a local church. We will definitely continue to be your partner in this project." On February 28th, Dr. Douglas W. Fombelle, the Dean of Bethel Seminary of the East, who is from Pennsylvania, said after my sharing, "If you form a 'Taiwan Mission' organization, put me on your advisory board." I thought to myself, "There is no 'Taiwan Mission' organization, yet everyone wants to advise for it! This is too funny!"

March 3rd saw heavy snows in New York, and my husband was in Asia for a business trip. For the first time, I deeply and quietly reflected on the past month and a half, and thought about why five different people physically located in three separate places would ask me to set up a "Taiwan Mission" organization. But how do I go about it? If I ignored all this and it happened to be God speaking to me through all these people, it would be terrible. What should I do? I had to speak to someone further about this. So I picked up the phone and called my good friend, sister Lydia Lin Chen from the Queens Taiwanese Evangelical Church. I told her all the amazing things that had happened to me in the past year and a half, especially in the past month and a half. I said, "How do you promote missions, especially in the northeast, where people are generally not excited about Taiwan Mission?" It was during this time that I suddenly thought about those seminary students who were required to take missions classes and participate in mission field internships.

Why not establish a one thousand dollar "Taiwan Mission" scholarship that would assist a seminary student with putting together a short-term mission team to Taiwan as their internship? And we will encourage pastors and organizers from churches by also providing this opportunity to them if they are interested in forming short-term mission teams. In this way, one thousand dollars may support a team, and it will be "One Thousand One Team"! What a nice slogan this forms! This is great! This is wonderful! Only after excitedly hanging up the phone did I think about, "Where would the money come from?"

Starting the very next day, I began to plead with God daily, and constantly debated with Him: "God! Even though I wish for this to happen, if I don't get the money or the volunteers, please don't blame me! But I promise I will not be lazy." Knowing that all the resources are in God's hand actually relieved me. But how much should I raise? One million dollars? When I thought about how easily rich entrepreneurs could set up a private foundation of one million dollars, I wondered if we could not do better pooling all these Christians together? That would make people laugh at the power of our God. "God, then how about ten million dollars?" Form a ten million dollar "Taiwan Mission Foundation", and use the ten million dollars to save ten million souls. If we raise three hundred thousand dollars from thirty people, we can set aside the ten million dollars as a permanent endowment fund, and generate five hundred thousand dollars on 5% interest each year. Separately, we can annually raise another three hundred thousand dollars from another thirty people (ten thousand dollars each), and one thousand dollars each from two hundred people, totaling another two hundred thousand dollars. In this way, we will have one million dollars every year to continuously send short and long term missionaries to Taiwan, and support an on-going campaign to reach the goal of 10% Christians in Taiwan in 10 years (this vision was first articulated by Dr. Howshan Lin).

However, everything must start with us taking action ourselves. After discussing it with my husband, we decided to donate a two-bedroom apartment we owned in the best location of New York's Forest Hills, worth three hundred to four hundred thousand dollars. I also decided to donate the ten thousand dollar check that my husband has been giving me these past few years for Christmas. I told God that if five people volunteered to donate ten thousand dollars annually, then I will establish the foundation. With a formulated fundraising and missions-support plan, I started telling everyone I saw about it. I joined a choir in the beginning of April, and during our break, I shared my vision with my sister friend sitting to the left of me, Tsui-Mei Liao. She said, "My aunt has a sum of money that she wants to donate but she has not yet determined where it should go." I asked her to *immediately* contact her aunt to set up an appointment, in fear that the money might "fly away" any minute. Four days later, on April 9th, I arrived at sister Ching-Yen Cheng's (Tsui-Mei's aunt's) house at 8pm to share my vision with her and four other members of her family. When I finished, sister Ching-Yen said, "I'll give you ten thousand." Tsui-Mei's mother, sister Ching-Ai, also said, "I will give you ten thousand, too." Sister Ching-Yen then continued, "I'll give you another three hundred thousand." I sat there shocked, unable to speak for a while, wondering if it was all real. Sister Ching-Yen then joked, "You can show up for work tomorrow," and joyfully we took a formal picture to commemorate it all. On April 15th, my husband told me that when his company, Goldman Sachs, invested money on behalf of its vice presidents, he still needed to pay taxes on it, so he was willing to give me another ten thousand. Wow! Four "ten thousands"! Miraculously, the next morning, Dr. Teng-Lung Hsu's wife Jui-Feng talked to me on the phone, "Teng-Lung was going to give you five thousand, but felt that this project was too important, so he has decided to give you ten thousand." Wow! That's five! Five "ten thousands"! I immediately called up my lawyer daughter Karen. When the boss at her firm, Perlman & Perlman, found out that it was Karen's mother who wanted to set up a nonprofit organization, he offered to provide the legal services for free. Wow! What a grand blessing! Especially since my daughter's firm specializes in assisting non-profit organizations, the

incorporation was completed within one week, on April 24th. And my birthday was on April 25th. I knew right away that this was God's birthday present to me. I must humbly admit, what God starts, He will fulfill himself! Immediately after this, a young and competent pastor, David Peng, also joined TMF Board. God's grace indeed is immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine.

The "Taiwan Mission Foundation (TMF)" was formally founded on April 25, 2007. Less than half a year later, on October 10, the United States government granted it tax-exempt status, and donations started pouring in. On November 17, Taiwan Mission Foundation held its first Thanksgiving Meeting to give thanks to God and fellow Christians for their support. By the end of 2007, the Foundation already used twenty thousand dollars to support the following missions and charitable activities: support two short-term missions teams; establish two "Taiwan Mission" scholarships at seminaries; support various missions organizations, including Gospel Village Mission, Taiwan Grass-Roots Mission, Industrial Evangelical Mission, Hakka Mission, Lifeline, Gospel Communication; support cancer patients and accident victims; and help the poor with cemetery plot purchases. An Overseas Student ministry and a Mission Training School are also in the works. We firmly believe that when we generously give with love, God will provide us again abundantly. After all, all resources belong to God himself. May the Gospel reach every corner of Taiwan with speed! Amen!

*"In any mission field, the most important thing is to have God's calling,
and to have native countrymen who have been trained by the Bible,
filled with and anointed by the Holy Spirit."*

~From Rev. James Hudson Taylor, II (grandson of English missionary
James Hudson Taylor), "Today is Tomorrow's Father", written for
12th Anniversary of Holy Light Bible College Celebrations ~